

Introduction

- Adolescence is a period of significant change in biological, social, and cognitive domains of functioning. It is also a time of great challenge, in which many risky behaviours are initiated.
- Youth between the ages of 15 to 24 have the highest rate of substance abuse problems compared to any other age group.
- Although increases in risky behaviours is a normative part of adolescence, early substance use can lead to dependence during adulthood, relationship issues and even premature death.
- It is well established that aspects of the parent-child relationship, such as positive communication and closeness can prevent early substance use among adolescents and that family-based programs are helpful in preventing youth addiction. Consequently, treatment programs that aim to repair aspects of the parent-child relationship such as family functioning are beneficial.
- It is unclear on whether family-based programs are beneficial for youth already struggling with an addiction.
- In the current study, we examined whether parental variables (family functioning and parental boundaries) improve during treatment and if this improvement was related to treatment success among youth.



Participants

- 66 adolescents and young adults aged 14 to 20 years ($M = 17.1$ years, $SD = 1.42$).
- The sex ratio was about 1:1 with 31 adolescents identifying as male and 35 as female.
- Almost 25% of participants reported using alcohol “four to six times per week” while 40% reported using marijuana more than once per day.

Measures

Family Functioning: *The McMaster Family Assessment Device (FAD;* Epstein, Baldwin, & Bishop, 1983)

Parental Boundaries: *Inadequate Boundaries Questionnaire (IBQ;* Mayeless & Scharf, 2000)

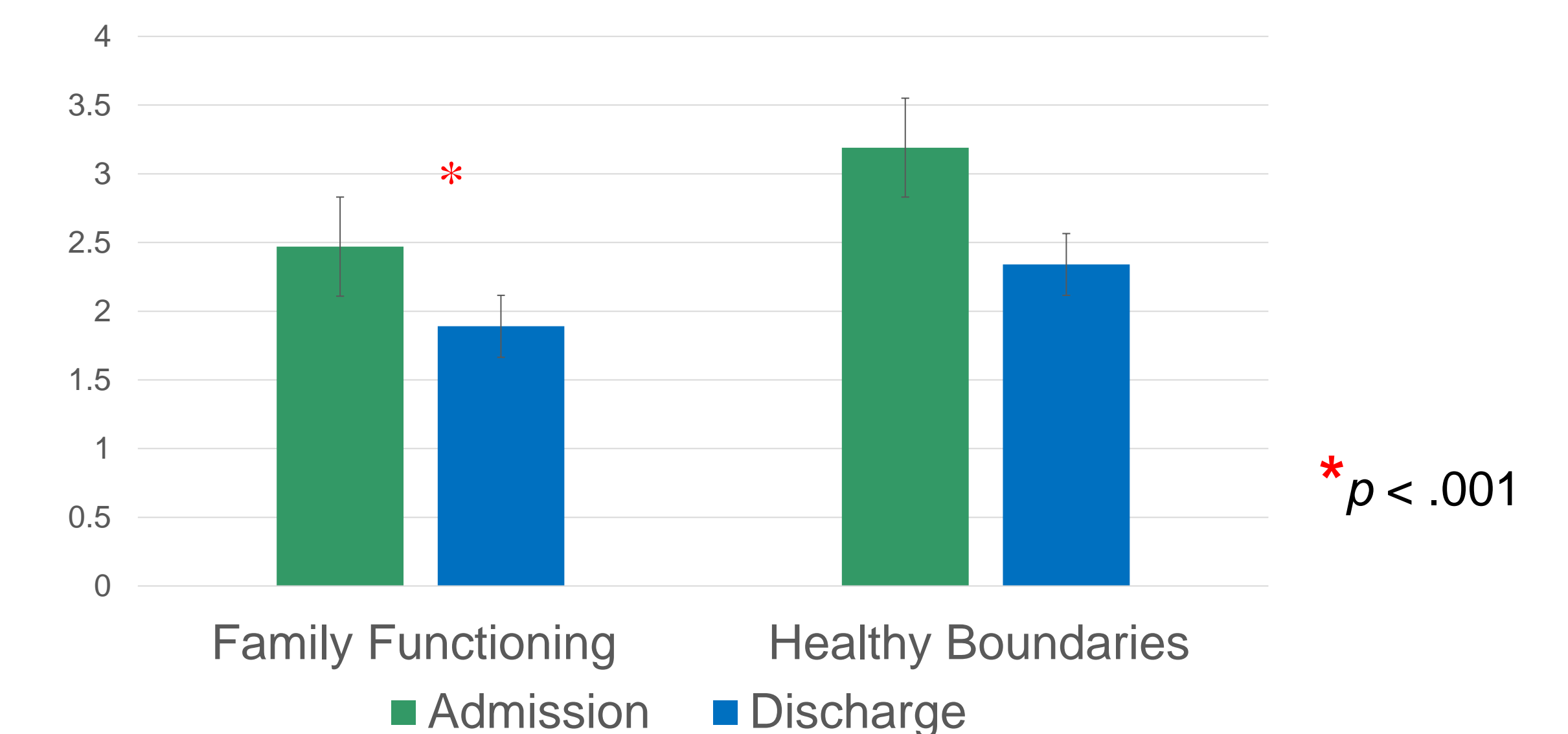
Substance use: *Drug History Questionnaire (DHQ;* Sobell & Sobell, 2007)

Behavioural and emotional problems: *The Achenbach System of Empirically Based Assessments (ASEBA)-Youth Self Report (YSR;* Achenbach & Rescola, 2001)

Overall functioning: *Global Appraisal of Individual Needs – Short Screener (GAIN-SS;* Dennis, Feeney, & Titus, 2013)

Results

There was an improvement in youth's family functioning and parental boundary scores from the start of treatment to the end, however, only family functioning reached statistical significance.



Note: lower scores indicate healthier family functioning and boundaries

Change in family functioning across treatment was related to change in treatment outcomes. Specifically, improvement in family functioning across treatment was related to decreases in alcohol consumption, fewer internalizing behaviours, fewer overall mental health problems and better overall functioning at post-treatment.

Change in Treatment Success Outcome Variables	Change in Family Functioning
Alcohol consumption (DHQ)	.71**
Marijuana consumption ((DHQ)	-.07
Internalizing behaviours (YSR)	.41*
Externalizing behaviours (YSR)	.35
Total mental health problems (YSR)	.40*
Overall functioning (GAIN-SS)	.48*

Note: * $p < .05$, ** $p < .001$. Due to small sample size, correlations were not run with healthy boundaries. Correlations were run using change scores.

References

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Discussion

Our results indicate that aspects of the parent-child relationship such as family functioning is a significant factor in reducing adolescent substance use. In the current study, improved family functioning was related to decreased alcohol consumption, fewer internalizing mental health problems and better overall functioning. Results highlight the importance of taking a family systems approach to understand adolescent substance abuse. Since the family system is a reciprocal unit, positive changes to the family environment also enforced positive changes to adolescent's overall well-being.

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